

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5841

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 17, 2015

Title: An act relating to a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

Brief Description: Creating a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

Sponsors: Senators King, Kohl-Welles, Rivers, Lias and Hobbs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/12/15, 2/17/15 [DP-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Baumgartner, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Frockt, Lias and Miloscia.

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: Under current law, children and surviving spouses of law enforcement officers, firefighters, or Washington State Patrol officers who lost their life or became totally disabled in the line of duty are exempt from tuition, services, and activities fees at public four-year institutions of higher education.

Summary of Bill: The public four-year institutions of higher education must exempt from the payment of all tuition fees and services and activities fees, children and surviving spouses of any highway workers who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty while employed by a transportation agency.

Transportation agency is defined as any agency, department, or division of a municipal corporation, political subdivision, or other unit of local government in this state, and any agency, department, or division of state government, having as its primary function the construction and maintenance of the highways and roads within the state of Washington. Such an agency, department, or division is distinguished from a transit agency having as one

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of its functions highway maintenance, including but not limited to the state Department of Transportation. A transportation agency does not include a government contractor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The law already provides tuition and fee waivers to other public employees who die in the line of duty. It is only fitting to include transportation workers and their families under the law, since these individuals also put their lives in danger while out doing public work. Highway workers are first responders who provide a public service to assist accidents and clear roads. The hope is that this program would not be needed for a large group of individuals, but it would still help provide financial assistance and support to open up educational opportunities for families who lose a loved one.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator King, prime sponsor; Vince Oliveri, Professional and Technical Employees; Matt Zuvich, WA Federation of State Employees; Terry Tilton, NW Carpenters; Greg Selstead, WA State Dept. of Transportation, Assistant State Maintenance Engineer; Kelsey Williams, citizen.